

Part Three: Integration and Recommendations

Chapter 12: Key Findings and Recommendations

Overview

The Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta is at a crossroads. There has been significant environmental deterioration in the Delta, and many people have raised concerns about the status of the levee system and its implication for the reliability of water exports from the Delta and flood protection within the Delta. Recent legislation and planning processes are considering long-range changes that would have profound implications for the economy and people of the Delta. In response to those concerns, the Delta Reform Act of 2009 tasked the Delta Protection Commission with developing the Economic Sustainability Plan for the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta. The Economic Sustainability Plan consists of three primary components:

- **Part I presents critical background and an overview of existing conditions.** This component includes an evaluation of demographic and economic data; a review of planning and land-use regulation in the Delta; and an assessment of levee conditions.
- **Part II analyzes specific important industry sectors and communities in the Delta.** This component focuses in on the strongest forces in the Delta economy, including agriculture- and recreation-related industries, as well as other key economic sectors. This component also explores the future of Legacy Communities and issues associated with public services in the Delta. Throughout Part II, the Economic Sustainability Plan considers the potential economic effects that could stem from various policy proposals for the Delta.
- **Part III ties together study findings and recommends economic sustainability strategies for the Delta.** This component integrates findings from Part I and Part II, highlighting the opportunities, constraints, and threats affecting the Delta's economy and communities. This component recommends specific action items and policy alternatives. Part III constitutes the Economic Sustainability Plan.

This Chapter provides an overview of the key findings for each component of the Economic Sustainability Plan.

Part I: Existing Conditions

Overview of the People and Economy of the Delta

The Delta is a relatively diverse, growing, and economically integrated region that in many respects is out-performing the state as a whole. However, within this larger context, the Delta's Primary Zone functions as a distinct sub-region with a demographic and economic profile that differs in many ways from both the region and the state. Although most of these differences stem from the more rural and sparsely populated nature of the Primary Zone, some are indicative of a less diversified and underperforming economy.

- **Population growth in the Primary Zone has stagnated while the surrounding region has experienced a population boom.** While the Legal Delta has experienced relatively

robust population growth over the last 20 years, increasing by about 54 percent since 1990 compared to 25 percent statewide, the Primary Zone population has remained essentially unchanged.

- ***With little new growth in the Primary Zone, the population is aging.*** Since 2000, the age distribution of the population in the Legal Delta has not changed dramatically, likely because of an influx of younger people in the Secondary Zone. In contrast, the age distribution in the Primary Zone has shifted older, with people age 55 and up accounting for a significantly greater share of the population, up from about 24 percent in 2000 to 38 percent today.
- ***There is less population diversity in the Primary Zone compared with the surrounding region.*** While the Legal Delta is made up of a relatively young and racially and ethnically diverse population, the Primary Delta is older and predominantly White and non-Hispanic. Approximately 43 percent of the Legal Delta's population describe themselves as non-White and approximately 81 percent are younger than 55 years of age, similar to the 39 percent and 79 percent statewide, respectively. In contrast, only about 25 percent of Primary Zone residents describe themselves as non-White and about 62 percent younger than 55 years of age.
- ***Employment growth in the Primary Zone has not kept pace with the surrounding region.*** While the Legal Delta has enjoyed employment gains in recent years, corresponding with increased urbanization, the Primary Zone appears to have lost jobs. However, when the volatile agricultural employment changes (likely due to contract labor trends) are excluded from the analysis, the Primary Zone also added jobs, particularly in manufacturing and construction.
- ***Agriculture is the most important industry in the Primary Zone economy.*** While the Legal Delta possesses a relatively diversified and stable economy, the Primary Zone is a highly resource-driven economy with a heavy reliance on agriculture and to a lesser degree recreation. The Legal Delta's four top employment sectors—retail, education, health care, and accommodations and food services—account for about 45 percent of all jobs, with a relatively equal distribution among each. In contrast, agriculture alone makes up about 45 percent of total employment in the Primary Zone.
- ***The Delta economy is highly export oriented, bringing new money into the region instead of recirculating existing income.*** In the Legal Delta, exports are roughly 33 percent of economic output, compared to the 24 percent for California overall. Agriculture-intensive areas, such as the Sacramento River Corridor—where exports make up approximately 64 percent of output, are even more distinctly export-oriented.

Review of Key Policies and Planning Processes

Since the late 1970s regional governance of the Delta has been implemented at the local, regional, and state level. In recent decades, a variety of agencies, commissions, and other governmental bodies have undertaken efforts to promote the health of the Delta. Today, local and State agencies have long-standing policies and programs to protect and enhance the natural resources, recreational values, and wildlife habitats in the Delta's Primary Zone. However, the stewardship of the Delta's natural resources continues to evolve as issues such as sustainability, water supply and quality, habitat, and access become more complex. The State's current Delta governance proposal retains local control over most actions, maintains the Delta Protection Commission with limited authority over some local land-use decisions, and

introduces the new Delta Stewardship Council as coordinator of all State-level programs, including water quality, water supply, habitat enhancement, public access and recreation, and land use.

- ***California's water conveyance plans have generated controversy and friction between regions of the state and among water stakeholders for decades.*** In the early 1980s, there was significant controversy over legislation to upgrade the statewide water system with a peripheral canal that would convey water around the Delta to pumps near Tracy. The project was narrowly rejected by California voters in June 1982.
- ***Severe drought, degraded environmental conditions, and degraded fisheries led to a joint State and federal process to address water issues in California and the Delta.*** From 1994 through 2000, the CALFED Bay-Delta Program developed a science-based planning process to make and implement actions and programs related to water and ecosystem management in the Delta and its watershed.
- ***State oversight of water issues in California and the Delta has evolved in recent years.*** The State legislature established the California Bay-Delta Authority in 2002, but that body was later disbanded, and the CALFED program was folded into the California Natural Resources Agency. In 2006, the Governor and legislature appointed a cabinet committee and a Delta Vision Blue-Ribbon Task Force to prepare the Delta Vision, a strategic plan completed in 2008. In late 2009, the Governor and legislature enacted a package of laws to implement the recommendations of the Delta Vision, creating the new Delta Stewardship Council, establishing the Delta Conservancy, and modifying the role of the Delta Protection Commission.
- ***Development pressure has influenced regional planning in the rural Delta.*** In the early 1970s, as agricultural lands in the Delta counties came under pressure for development, the five Delta counties came together to develop a regional strategy for future development of the Delta. The Delta Area Planning Council (DAPC) adopted a plan for the region which supported agricultural and recreational land uses. Funding for the Delta Area Planning Council dwindled in the late 1980s and interest in State-level planning and coordination increased in the late 1980s.
- ***Creation of the Delta Protection Commission solidified the State's role in Delta planning and governance.*** In 1992, after the State conducted studies and hearings about the need to plan for the future of the Delta and the protection of its critical natural resources, the legislature approved the Johnston-Baker-Andal-Boatwright Delta Protection Act which established the Delta Protection Commission, a body with membership from State agencies, local counties and cities, and Delta water agencies. The Delta Protection Commission is a State entity created to plan and guide the conservation and enhancement of the natural resources of the Delta while sustaining agriculture and meeting increased recreational demand.
- ***The Delta Protection Act established a framework for State influence over Delta land-use planning and decision making.*** The act divided the Delta into the Primary Zone and the Secondary Zone. The Primary Zone consists of the agricultural lands in the "core" of the Legal Delta. The State charged the Delta Protection Commission with preparation of a land-use and resource-management plan for the Primary Zone of the Delta, to address agriculture, recreation, and terrestrial wildlife habitat. The Delta Protection Commission possesses land-use jurisdiction in the Primary Zone and the actions of local governments

may be appealed to the Commission. Land uses in the Secondary Zone remain solely under the authority of local governments and the Delta Protection Commission has no authority over State or federal agencies.

- **County-level planning is consistent with the Delta Protection Commission Resource Management Plan.** After the Delta Protection Commission adopted its original Land Use and Resource Management Plan for the Primary Zone of the Delta, each county and city was required to ensure that its general plan was consistent with the Commission's plan. All of the county and city general plans covering the Primary Zone were determined to be consistent with the Delta Protection Commission plan, though each county addresses land-use planning in ways reflecting their community values and local history.
- **The unincorporated communities in the Primary Zone all have their own community plans/special area plans.** The communities of Clarksburg in Yolo County; Courtland, Locke, and Walnut Grove in Sacramento County; and the City of Isleton, the only incorporated city in the Primary Zone, have their own, unique land-use plans.

Flood, Earthquake, and Sea-Level Rise Risk Management

The present-day Delta is defined geographically and hydraulically by levees, creating a landscape that differs from that of the historic, natural Delta. In place since the early 20th century, the current-day levee system provides flood control, channels water for urban and agricultural uses, and creates an environment unique in California. While Delta levees require investment, maintenance and enhancement is manageable if addressed strategically. Further, enhancement of Delta levee could have significant benefits for economic sustainability.

- **The State of California is committed to maintaining and enhancing the Delta levees.** It is the overall policy of the State to "protect, maintain, and, where possible, enhance and restore the overall quality of the Delta environment, including, but not limited to, agriculture, wildlife habitat, and recreational activities."¹⁴⁹ It is also the policy of the State to "improve flood protection by structural and nonstructural means to ensure an increased level of public health and safety."¹⁵⁰
- **Only about 460 miles of Primary Zone levees need to be maintained and enhanced by the State and the local reclamation districts.** There are approximately 1,000 miles of levees in the Legal Delta. Excluding the 380 miles of project levees constructed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers and an additional 63 miles of urban, non-project levees, there are about 650 miles of levees, which protect lands below sea level in the Primary Zone of the Delta. Further excluding the 193 miles of project levees located primarily along the Sacramento River leaves roughly 460 miles levees that need to be maintained by State and local entities.
- **Non-project levees in the Primary Zone are in better condition than they are often portrayed.** Of the 460 miles of levees identified above, only about 50 miles clearly fall short of FEMA's Hazard Mitigation Plan standard. Further, 100 miles or more are already at or about the Corps of Engineer's Delta-specific PL 84-99 standard.

¹⁴⁹ Delta Reform Act, 2009, W.C. 29702 (b)

¹⁵⁰ W.C. 29702 (d)

- ***Funds currently in the pipeline should bring Delta levees close to achieving goals for maintenance and enhancement.*** State and federal governments, working through the Department of Water Resources, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and the local reclamation districts, are working to meet the Delta-specific PL 84-99 standard. This goal has been in place since 1982, when the Department of Water Resources and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers produced a joint report on the Delta levees which recommended this standard.
- ***Through modern engineering and construction, Delta levees have been improved significantly, making some historic data misleading.*** Once pipeline funds have been expended, nearly \$700 million will have been invested in improvements to the Delta levees since 1973. The improvements have enhanced critical levees throughout the Delta, but outdated data derived from the older levees is still sometimes used for planning or predicting rates of levee failure. These data have, at times, skewed the understanding of true Delta levee conditions.
- ***Three approaches can help all jurisdictions and planners further reduce the risks resulting from the failure of the Delta levees.*** These approaches are: (1) build even more robust levees, (2) improve both regular maintenance and monitoring and flood-fighting and emergency response following earthquakes, and (3) improve preparedness for dealing with failures after they occur.
- ***Levees should be improved to a higher standard that addresses earthquakes and sea-level rise risks.*** The question is not whether levees should be improved to the PL 84-99 standard—that is already happening. The higher standard would comply with the policies of the State, allow for planting vegetation on the water side of the levees, provide for two-way traffic, and could be widened at selected locations to accommodate development.

Part II: Key Economic Sectors, Legacy Communities, and Public Services

Framework for Analysis

The Economic Sustainability Plan provides targeted analysis of key economic sectors, public services, and Legacy Communities in the Delta. For each detailed assessment, the Economic Sustainability Plan relies on a common framework for evaluation.

- ***Current Status and Trends:*** Includes a data-driven description of the current baseline and trends for the sector.
- ***Outcomes and Strategies under Baseline Conditions:*** Discusses the likely outcomes for the economic sector under the baseline policy scenario, followed by recommendations that might improve economic sustainability under the baseline scenario.
- ***Economic Impact of Policy Scenarios:*** Provides an evaluation of the positive and negative impacts of alternative policy choices on economic sustainability in each area. The

policy scenarios are focused in four important areas: water conveyance, habitat enhancement, levee and flood control investment, and land-use regulation.

Despite the common analytical framework, the methodology differs by topic. For some topics, such as agricultural production, impacts are analyzed in detail using a quantitative approach. Other topics, such as Delta tourism and recreation, rely on more qualitative analysis and expert opinion.

Agriculture

The analysis of agriculture in the Delta clearly establishes this sector as the most significant component of the Delta economy and a driver of economic activity in the region. The analysis relies on a variety of detailed and current land use and agricultural data to value current and future agricultural activities in the Delta. In addition, the study considers the potential impact of policy changes affecting Delta agriculture.

- ***The majority of the Delta's agricultural lands have California's highest quality-rating designation.*** Close to 80 percent of all farmland in the Delta is classified as "Prime Farmland" by the California Farmland Mapping and Monitoring Program. This designation reflects soil quality and irrigation found on Delta farms.
- ***Over 60 percent of the Legal Delta's land area is actively being farmed with crops.*** Total cropped acreage in 2010 was about 420,000 acres, not including approximately 38,000 acres of grazing land. The top five Delta crops in terms of acreage are corn, alfalfa, tomatoes, wheat, and grapes. Many other field crops, fruit and nut crops, and vegetable crops are also found in the Delta.
- ***Agricultural production in the Delta is valued at approximately 25 percent of total agricultural production value in the five Delta counties.*** Total agricultural revenues in the Delta were \$753 million in 2009, including approximately \$660 million dollars in crops, and \$93 million from animals and animal products.
- ***Vegetables and fruits grown in large quantities for city markets and vineyard crops for winemaking contribute the most to the agricultural production value of the Delta.*** These truck crops and vineyard crops account for 56 percent of total crop revenues, using just 17 percent of farmed acreage in the Delta. The top five Delta crops in terms of production value are tomatoes, grapes, corn, alfalfa, and asparagus. The highest per-acre values in the Delta come from truck crops, mainly situated in the southern Delta, and deciduous tree crops, principally located in the northern Delta.
- ***Delta agriculture is significant to the economy of the region and the state.*** Delta crop and animal production supports roughly 9,000 jobs, \$635 million in value added, and \$1.3 billion in output in the five Delta counties. Across all of California, the economic impact of Delta agriculture is approximately 12,000 jobs, \$761 million in value added, and \$1.5 billion in output.
- ***Agriculture is directly linked to downstream industries which magnify the economic importance of Delta farming.*** When regional canneries and wineries are included with crop and animal production, the total economic impact of Delta agriculture is roughly 14,000 jobs, \$1.1 billion in value added, and nearly \$2.8 billion in economic output in the five Delta

counties. In addition, Delta agriculture supports nearly 23,000 jobs, over \$1.9 billion in value added, and over \$4.6 billion in economic output in California.

- ***The long-run baseline Delta agriculture forecast predicts an increase in truck crops and decreases in field and grain crops by 2050.*** Despite a potential 10 percent decline in field and grain crop acres, these crops would still dominate Delta agriculture acreage. The shift to higher-value crops could lead to an estimated \$115 million gain in crop revenues (current dollars).
- ***The effect of isolated conveyance on salinity and agricultural production value is uncertain at this time.*** Preliminary estimates of the Delta's lost agricultural production value from increased salinity attributable to isolated conveyance range from \$30 million to \$70 million per year. Losses could be higher if a 15,000-cfs conveyance project were operated to increase water exports beyond the levels currently proposed.
- ***The agricultural impacts of most of the BDCP conservation measures are difficult to quantify due to the lack of precision in site specification and other details.*** Tidal habitat restoration is anticipated to have the largest direct impact on agricultural revenues per year due to large acreage targets in high-value crop areas.

Recreation and Tourism

The analysis of recreation and tourism takes a broad view of leisure activities in the Delta, including resource-related activities, right-of-way- and tourism-related activities, and urban parks-related activities. The analysis relies on a variety of data to establish current use patterns, future visitation potential, and possible impacts from policy changes in the Delta.

- ***Recreation is an integral part of the Delta, complementing its multiple resources and contributing to the economic vitality of the region.*** Nearby residents visit virtually every day, generating a total of roughly 12 million visitor days of use annually and spending of roughly \$250 million dollars in the Delta each year.
- ***The Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta supports a diversity of recreation experiences.*** From the thrill of a speeding personal watercraft to the relaxation of canoeing or cruising, from hunting game birds to the quiet observation of a flock of Sand Hill cranes, from studying the early history of Chinese workers to the tasting of local wines, the Delta offers a wide variety of activities.
- ***The majority of visitors to the Delta are from Northern California, an area with great population growth potential.*** The residents of a dozen counties around the Delta represent the principal market for growth in Delta visitation in the future. This market area has a population of approximately 11.9 million people and projections indicate this figure could grow by roughly 48 percent or 5.7 million people by 2050.
- ***Recreation visitation to the Delta is primarily attributable to resource-related activities.*** Of the roughly 12 million visitor days spent in the Delta each year, approximately 8 million days are for resource-related activities (e.g., boating and fishing), 2 million days are for right-of-way-related and tourism activities (e.g., bicycling and driving for pleasure), and 2 million days are for urban parks-related activities (e.g., picnicking and organized sports).

- ***Recreation-related economic activity in the Primary Zone has been relatively flat over the past 20 years.*** Data concerning employment at marinas in other boating-related industries reveal that the number of jobs in these sectors remains largely unchanged. This trend is corroborated by data that indicate that the number of marinas in the Primary Zone is about the same as a decade ago.
- ***Delta recreation is significant to the economy of the region and the state.*** Excluding visitors to urban recreation areas (e.g., City of Stockton waterfront), spending by visitors to the Delta supports roughly 2,700 jobs, \$152 million in value added, and \$284 million in economic output in the five Delta counties. Across all of California, the economic impact of Delta recreation is approximately 5,000 jobs, \$324 million in value added, and \$600 million in output.
- ***Trends affecting Delta recreation suggest that there is potential for increased recreation visitation in the future.*** Over the next 50+ years, positive physical changes to the Delta, population growth in Northern California, increasing agricultural and environmental tourism, and stronger preferences for recreation close to home could boost visitor days in the Delta.
- ***The potential negative impacts of increased recreation on natural resources and agricultural activities can be minimized through careful planning.*** By focusing recreation uses and clustering visitor activities, undesirable effects commonly associated with increased recreation access and development can be diminished.
- ***A potential plan for the enhancement of recreation in the Delta centers on five location-based strategies.*** Under this approach, recreation growth would emphasize specific waterways, points of interest, focal point complexes (e.g., Bethel Island/Jersey Island/Big Break); natural habitat areas; and urban edge areas that surround the Delta (e.g., Stockton).
- ***Recreation development in the Delta should be coordinated, consistent, branded, and marketed.*** A “facilitator organization” could be created to develop the Delta brand, prepare and implement a marketing strategy, and facilitate establishment of a significant-scale focal point area, among other functions.
- ***The long-run baseline recreation visitation forecast predicts a 35 percent increase in visitation by 2050.*** Detailed market study and professional judgment suggest that if resource quality and recreational facilities are maintained such that the Delta retains its current level of competitiveness as a recreation destination, visitation could increase by 3.4 million visitor days over 40 years. Assuming that current visitor spending patterns remain unchanged and Delta business growth accommodates recreation-related spending increases, visitor spending in the Delta would increase by roughly \$78 million (current dollars).
- ***The effects of potential policy scenarios on Delta recreation are difficult to assess, but could be significant.*** Rough judgment-based estimates indicate that the impact of the policy scenarios on visitation could range from a decrease of approximately 23 percent to an increase of approximately 13 percent over the baseline scenario. The largest potential for negative impacts is from additional regulatory constraints while the greatest potential for positive impacts would come from the significant habitat conservation. Associated economic

impacts could range from a negative impact of nearly \$80 million to a positive impact of almost \$50 million in visitor spending.

Infrastructure

There are two primary categories of infrastructure in the Delta, including (1) infrastructure that serves the Delta and (2) infrastructure that passes through the Delta. This infrastructure analysis focuses on infrastructure that serves the Delta, including transportation, energy, and water resources and flood control.

- ***Transportation and energy infrastructure are important components of the regional economy.*** Transportation and energy infrastructure support the trade flows and the production of goods and services in the regional economy. These infrastructure types are vulnerable to floods, earthquakes, and sea-level rise, making maintenance and enhancement of protective levees crucial.
- ***Water resources originating in the Delta are critical to the regional economy.*** Declines in water quality—whether an increase in salts or organic carbon—can have very negative effects on both agriculture and urban water supplies. Delta water quality is potentially threatened by isolated conveyance and some proposed conservation measures that are being proposed as part of BDCP. Delta water quality would also be threatened by the six-island open-water scenario.
- ***Even with sea-level rise, Delta water quality can be protected and improved.*** Enhancing Delta levees to a higher standard and restoring or developing tidal marshes in the far western Delta, downstream of Sherman Island, and in the Suisun Marsh, will help maintain current water quality. In addition, cleaning up the San Joaquin River would improve Delta water quality beyond current conditions, generating benefits for both human use and the Delta ecosystem.
- ***In some cases, increased water conveyance and flood control can be achieved while creating environmental benefits.*** An example of a win-win solution is provided by the proposed Lower San Joaquin River Bypass. This project would both reduce peak water surface elevations in the San Joaquin River adjacent to Lathrop and Stockton and provide ecosystem benefits by activating floodplains. Increased organic carbon would only occur for a relatively short period of time and at periods of high flows, so that the impacts on water quality would be minimized.
- ***The beneficiaries of levee infrastructure should contribute to maintenance and enhancement funding.*** Other infrastructure that passes through the Delta without providing services or contributing to the economy of the Delta should be levied in some fashion in order to help fund the maintenance and improvement of the levee system on which it relies. This particularly includes through-Delta conveyance of water.

Other Key Economic Sectors

While agriculture and recreation-related businesses are clearly the economic drivers in the predominantly rural Delta Primary Zone, there are important economic linkages that attract manufacturing and real estate firms. Construction companies are also prevalent in the Primary

Zone. This chapter examines the manufacturing, real estate, and construction sectors in detail to acknowledge the importance of these businesses in the Delta economy.

- ***Manufacturing, with close ties to agriculture and recreation, is essential to the Delta economy.*** The manufacturing sector includes businesses with operations that range from agricultural implement fabrication to wine production to boat construction. Manufacturing comprises nearly 10 percent of Primary Zone employment now and potentially more in the future.
- ***Real Estate is closely tied to recreation, with several visitor-serving businesses categorized as real estate entities.*** Real estate businesses in the Primary Zone range from marinas to self-storage facilities to independent real estate brokers. This industry comprises more than 4 percent of jobs in the Primary Zone, more than 2.5 times the sector's share of employment in the five-county region.
- ***Construction businesses cluster in the Primary Zone.*** Firms in this industry comprise 9 percent of employment in the Delta, greater than this sector's 6.6 percent share of employment in the five-county region. Primarily engaged in residential construction, construction firms in the Primary Zone are frequently found at the urban-rural fringe, where large lots are proximate to dense populations.
- ***Other sectors will be important to achieving overall sustainability in the future, including retail, healthcare, and transportation businesses.*** While not common in the Primary Zone today, firms in these sectors would support growth, as well as provide benefits to the currently underserved resident population.

Local Government Services in the Delta

This chapter addresses the complexities of providing important government services to various geographic areas of the Delta, providing context for future analysis of the challenges of improving or increasing public services in the Delta.

- ***A multitude of county entities and local districts provide public services in the Delta.*** With only one city in the Primary Zone, counties typically provide public safety and emergency response services; local fire districts cover fire protection; and local school districts supply education. In this environment, providing adequate levels of service is challenging.

Legacy Communities

This chapter discusses the Legacy Communities of the Sacramento–San Joaquin Delta, including detailed study and focused economic sustainability planning for Clarksburg, Walnut Grove, and Locke. This chapter discusses a potential “vision” of a sustainable future for each of these focal communities and discusses high-level implementation strategies with potential action items.

- ***Outdoor and cultural recreation remains critical to long-term sustainability.*** Already a well-known and heavily visited recreation area, daytrip and overnight visitors are an important source of revenue for Delta businesses. It is crucial to maintain and enhance

outdoor and cultural recreation offerings in the Delta, ensuring that the Delta remains a top visitor destination for outdoor and cultural recreation in Northern California.

- **Improved lodging, entertainment, and retail options could capture additional tourism dollars.** Despite the significant number of recreation visitors to the Delta, there are relatively few hotel rooms, stores, and attractions. Overnight accommodations and entertainment options, in combination with supporting retail, could increase visitation, length of stay, and spending in the Delta.
- **Transportation-related improvements would enhance the visual landscape, attract visitors, and improve public safety.** Roadway landscaping, signage, bike lanes, sidewalks, parking, transportation services, and other transportation-related improvements are needed in the Delta. Investments in transportation will improve quality of life for residents and increase tourism potential.
- **Restored historic buildings and contextual infill development would improve community aesthetics and support economic growth.** The Legacy Communities offer a unique sense of place and history that must be preserved. Historic preservation should be pursued in concert with new projects. Reinvestment and new investment in real estate is critical to economic sustainability. Development projects that are consistent with the existing community fabric will be an important factor in retention and recruitment of businesses.
- **Festivals and community celebrations would raise awareness and generate economic activity.** There are numerous festivals and community events each year that boost tourism and business activity in Delta. Additional visitor programming, coordinated scheduling, marketing, and branding could increase the economic benefits of existing and future events in the Delta.
- **A strict and multi-layered regulatory framework limits economic development.** With numerous government agencies overseeing land use in the Legacy Communities, permitting new projects is frequently a costly and lengthy process. Furthermore, some projects are disallowed entirely.
- **Risks associated with insufficient flood protection restrict new investment.** Adequate flood protection is essential to economic development in the Delta. Costly new and improved levees are necessary to encourage reinvestment and new investment in the Legacy Communities.
- **Housing options for Delta workers are limited.** Only about one in ten employees working in the Primary Zone also lives there. Without sufficient workforce housing, Delta employers must recruit non-local employees who must drive long distances to work, thereby compromising “sustainability” from an environmental standpoint.
- **The Vision for Clarksburg – A Vibrant Agricultural Community.** Clarksburg’s primary competitive advantage is its agricultural abundance. This region produces exceptional agricultural goods, most notably wine grapes, and attracts visitors who tour farms and wineries. The Economic Sustainability Plan proposes that the vision for Clarksburg build on momentum in the areas of agricultural tourism and value added agricultural processing. Clarksburg should retain its historic character, grow as a food and wine destination, and attract new agriculture-related “craft production” businesses.

- ***The Vision for Walnut Grove – The Heart of the Delta’s Sacramento River Corridor.*** Walnut Grove is centrally located, with a cluster of businesses providing residents, workers, and visitors a variety of goods and services not found elsewhere in the Primary Zone. The Economic Sustainability Plan proposes that the vision for Walnut Grove build on its status as local a business hub. Walnut Grove should preserve its community character; grow and diversify business activity; and continue to strengthen its physical connection to the Sacramento River.
- ***The Vision Locke – A Historic Delta Community.*** Locke is known for its cultural heritage, historical significance, unique building stock, and points of interest. With great sensitivity to cultural, historical, and environmental values, the Economic Sustainability Plan proposes that Locke would leverage its notable assets to increase tourism and spending in the community. Locke should preserve its historic character, offer improved hospitality and visitor services, and revitalize its “main street” business environment.
- ***A “Facilitator Organization” should manage economic sustainability efforts in the Primary Zone.*** An overarching entity for economic development should plan, coordinate, and participate in the implementation of the Economic Sustainability Plan. Future planning efforts would build on recommendations and findings from this Plan, refining the goals for the Legacy Communities and prioritizing potential strategic actions. As a coordinator, the Facilitator Organization would ensure that strategic actions, such as marketing efforts and economic development, are implemented in a systematic, efficient, and consistent fashion throughout the Legacy Communities. Additionally, the Facilitator Organization might contribute to implementation directly, either carrying out implementation actions independently or in partnership with public and private sector partners.
- ***Agricultural tourism has growth potential.*** Some farm-related recreation is currently found throughout the Delta and interest is growing. Farms and other agricultural businesses are increasingly leisure destinations, with businesses seeking direct sales and brand awareness and visitors seeking fresh food and a physical connection to their food source.
- ***Potential strategic implementation actions, including catalyst development projects at specific opportunity sites, must be analyzed, refined, and prioritized.*** The Economic Sustainability Plan considers a number of strategic actions for the communities of Clarksburg, Walnut Grove, and Locke. In addition, specific sites are evaluated for higher and better land-use potential. The proposed strategic actions and the review of opportunity sites presented in this chapter are intentionally high-level. As community-specific economic sustainability goals are refined over time, associated strategic actions will need to be updated and further detailed.